

# THE THOREAU SOCIETY BULLETIN

Number Eleven

April, 1945

## THE WALDEN CENTENARY

In the January BULLETIN we announced that we hoped to celebrate the centenary of Thoreau's going to Walden with a special meeting in Concord. Unfortunately the ODT has since banned all such meetings and so we have had to cancel our plans. However we do not plan to let the event go by unmarked. The local groups in both Concord and New York City plan to hold special meetings in mid-summer and all who are in the vicinity will be invited to attend. Notice will be sent to all within easy reach of Concord and New York City when the plans are worked out.

Meanwhile there seems to be more Thoreau activity this year than any time we can recall. Thoreau Night at Cooper Union you will find described elsewhere in this issue. John Rea sends us a clipping (DAILY ILLINI, Jan. 24) reporting Arthur Christy's lecture at the University of Illinois on Jan. 23rd on "The Significance of Thoreau in American Cultural History." Florence Becker Lennon writes of Thoreau exhibits in the Boulder, Col. Public Library in February, at the Denver Public Library in April, and the University of Colorado Library in June. Raymond Adams lectured in Chapel Hill on March 27th on "Thoreau at Walden, 1845." Roger Payne lectured at Community Church, New York City on Jan. 7th on Thoreau with the title "Man Vs. Man-kind."

The local groups are far from inactive. The Concord group has expanded its program to include all the Concord authors and on New Year's Eve heard Frederick McGill speak on Ellery Channing. Mrs. Jane Greeley Chapman has started a local group in Berkeley, Cal. which bids fair to become the western center of Thoreau activities. The New York City group has conducted a series of monthly meetings centered on readings from Thoreau and from June 15th to July 15th will sponsor a centenary exhibition at the American Museum of Natural History. And the year has only begun!



"Oh, you'd like Thoreau."

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In 1900, New York University established the Hall of Fame on its New York City campus to honor the great Americans in every field of endeavor. Every five years approximately one hundred well-known people, scattered throughout the country, are called upon to elect additional candidates to the hall. Strangely enough though such comparatively little-known Americans as Maria Mitchell and James Kent have been elected in the past, Thoreau has not yet so been honored. It might well be imagined that he might feel ill at ease among the politicians and generals already in the hall. He would not feel too lonely with Emerson, Hawthorne and Whitman already there. We think it time that his country show at least this much recognition of his genius.

For election to the hall, it is necessary that at least three-fifths of the board of electors cast a vote for Thoreau. This is the year of the quinquennial election and on May 1st ballots will be sent out to the electors which they will return by October 15th. Thoreau's name will be on that ballot. In the 1940 election he lacked only two or three votes of the necessary three-fifths. This year he should certainly achieve it.

In 1940, T.L. Bailey of Cleveland conducted single-handedly a campaign to have Thoreau elected and he helped persuade sixty of the electors to cast a vote for HDT. Surely the concerted efforts of the full membership of our society should make certain his election. Try to see that Thoreau's candidacy is well-publicized. The Hall of Fame sent out a press release on February 5th on Thoreau's nomination and it was printed in a good many newspapers that day (N.Y. TIMES and N.Y. SUN, etc.). Since that time there have been other articles in the various journals, but there need to be a great many more. Won't you write a brief notice or letter to the editor of your favorite magazine or newspaper?

Still another method of advancing his candidacy is to write the individual electors sometime in the next few months. Here is a list of their names (addresses may be found in WHO'S WHO):

College presidents: Frank Aydelotte, Isaiah Bowman, B.M. Cherrington, Robert Clothier, Norman Coleman, James Bryant Conant, Charles Dabney, George Denny, H.W. Dodds, Clarence Dykstra, F.L. Eversull, W.T. Foster, Rufus Harris, Caroline Hazard, Edgar L. Hewett, Ernest Holland, Hamilton Holt, Alfred Hume, J.H. MacCracken, Frank McVey, Homer Rainey, J.H. Reynolds, Alexander Ruthven, Most Rev. J.H. Ryan, Kenneth Sills, Mary Woolley, Henry Wriston.

Historians: James Truslow Adams, Henry Bourne, Richard Dabney, Guy Stanton Ford, Robert McElroy, Andrew McLaughlin, John McPherson, Edwin Mims, Henry Sedgwick, Frederick Tupper.

Scientists: Roy Chapman Andrews, D.C. Balfour, Hugh Cabot, John Merriam, Robert Millikan, Theodore Riggs, Florence Sabin, William Swann.

Authors & Artists: Herbert Adams, Struthers Burt, Royal Cortissoz, Stanley Easton, John Erskine, Ellen Glasgow, Helen Keller, Walter Lippman, Anne O'Hare McCormick, Edna St Vincent Millay, Harrison Morris, Harvey Newbranch, Meredith Nicholson, Clarence Poe, Joseph Pulitzer, Archibald Rutledge, Albert Shaw, Dorothy Thompson, Stark Young.

Men of affairs: G. Gordon Battle, Mabel Boardman, Arthur Brown, Cyrus Eaton, Cameron Forbes, Harry Emerson Fosdick, Ralph Hayes, David Spence Hill, Archer Huntington, Thomas Lamont, John Mott, Rt. Rev. James Perry, Lewis Perry, Abby Rockefeller, Charles Warren, Owen Young.

Public officials: Henry Allen, Percival Baxter, William Bullitt, Tom Connally, Wilbur Cross, John Davis, Lewis Douglas, Marriner Eccles, Theodore Marburg, James Murray, Matthew Neely, Ruth Baker Pratt, Herbert Putnam, Edith Nourse Rogers, Henry Stimson, Hutton Summers, Henry Wallace.

Justices: Florence Allen, Felix Frankfurter, Learned Hand, Charles Even Hughes, Frank Norcross.



On Friday January 5th, far-famed Cooper Union in New York City devoted an evening to the commemoration of the centenary of Thoreau's Walden experiment with a round table discussion of the pertinence of his philosophy today. Probably the largest meeting ever held in honor of HDT, over a thousand people attended to hear four great authorities speak: Raymond Adams, the president of our society; Roger Baldwin, chairman of the American Civil Liberties Union; Henry Seidel Canby, biographer of Thoreau; and Roger Payne, the "hobo-philosopher." So much did we enjoy the evening that we asked each of the speakers to give us a brief digest of his talk to share with those of you who were not at the meeting:

#### Raymond Adams

One of the great invasions of this war is the invasion of our selves! The war itself invades us, and the very liberties we are fighting for we lose during the fighting. One by one we have lost (temporarily) a great many liberties. We have lost freedom of movement. I might not have been able to come to New York had someone with a priority wanted my place. So I was not free to travel as I pleased. The navy has closed some of our streets in Chapel Hill, so we are not free to go where we please. Even the street to the cemetery has been closed; so we must detour to the grave. Nor are we free to buy what we please and when we please. And shopping for food and clothing now is twice as hard a job and takes at least twice as long. Now, all this obviously complicates life more than it used to be. And if we must spend twice as much time thinking about how to buy food and clothes, we are twice as materialistic--using twice as much energy and attention on the materials of life--as we used to be.

It was just such complications, different in detail and in a different situation, that sent Henry Thoreau to Walden Pond. There were other reasons for his going, but complexity and materialism were two of the reasons. The lesson in his venture for us is that in this time, when complication and materialism is forced upon us, we can in our own way both simplify our living and, precisely where we are, go down through opinion and prejudice to solid rock of truth and see what we may stand on and be sure of. We should do this where we are. Thoreau did not go west or go whaling as so many of his disgusted contemporaries did. He drove his life into a corner in Concord--down in the southeast corner of the town of Concord. In our own place, our own Concord, we can similarly drive our lives into a corner and find out if we need to be as materialistic as we are and if we need to have all the complications of life which we have. And we may conclude with Thoreau that it is not necessary that life be as bad as it seems.

#### Roger Baldwin

I grew up in Massachusetts only a few miles from Concord. Thoreau's country was my early playground. As a boy I fished in the Concord river, swam in sandy pond, and visited Walden so young that I can't remember not always knowing it. Henry Thoreau was a household figure, often spoken of, frequently read, as familiar to me as a dozen other of the Concord and Boston writers whom many of the older folks had known. He was more kin to me than most of them because I too, as a country boy, came naturally to nature study and early developed an abiding interest in birds and the ponds and streams. Thoreau was to me then a naturalist. Only later did he become a philosopher, a man of granite integrity. What I heard of him did not inspire great admiration. He was queer, different enough to be the butt of jokes and of caustic references to his thriftless loafing ways. He grew on me only with the years as I came to appreciate the values he held high over the conventions of a property-minded conformist middle-class.

Thoreau's universalism was never more strikingly brought home to me than during a day I spent with Mr. Gandhi on a train trip through France in 1931. Mr. Gandhi had as the only visible book in his compartment the "Duty of civil disobedience." I remarked on it as rather extreme doctrine for a nationalist. Mr. Gandhi responded that it contained the essence of his political philosophy, not

only as India's struggle related to the British, but as to his own views of the relation of citizens to government. He observed, as I believe he has written, that Thoreau first formulated for him the tactic of civil disobedience, whose very name he borrowed, and gave it moral justification.

In three fields Thoreau will long live as a creative spirit: in the interpretation of nature in its deepest relationships to men; in a philosophy of social relationships based on the integrity and power of the individual; and in a political philosophy of liberty more relevant today than ever against the vast stateism around us. In all three fields it has been my good fortune to grow up with him as guide and inspirer.

#### Henry S. Canby

Thoreau is perhaps most widely known as a naturalist, but unlike most other naturalists, he was not interested in classification. In ornithology for example he made many errors of identification--mistaking the hermit for the wood thrush, and so on--that are almost inconceivable to the modern bird student with his powerful field glasses and ready handbook, neither of which were available to Thoreau. But he cared little about particular species. Instead he was trying to make some great philosophic and transcendental generalization, relating the natural phenomena to man and the soul of man. His purpose was mystical rather than scientific. The truth is that he was born too soon. Only today are scientists turning to an over-all philosophy of nature and trying to discover a relationship between it and man's spiritual life.

Thoreau did not succeed fully in his enterprise. He lacked the tools and methods of science developed since his day. And as he failed, he turned more and more to a factual observation of nature as a study of his Journal shows. Yet what he did was to record the behaviour of his plants and birds and mammals as if it were significant of inner universal truths which we must somehow grasp. That is what the advanced scientist with a philosophic mind (a rare animal) does today. That is why Thoreau's records have an imaginative truth very much more important for the progress of man than more minute observations controlled in the interest of fact.

#### Roger Payne

The "hobo philosophy" and that of Thoreau both deal with the same question: How long is it necessary for a man to work in order to obtain the food, clothing and shelter necessary to maintain his existence. Both philosophies have the same method of solution, "simplicity of living," which means that if a man will reduce his wants to somewhere near his needs, he will have to spend very little time in work. Both philosophies have the same answer to this question: About one day a week or about fifty days in the year.

Thoreau as early as his Commencement Oration at Harvard in 1837 suggested that we should have six Sundays and only one work day in each week. At Walden Pond he bettered this by gaining his living working between thirty and forty days in the year. When I tried this simplification of life and lived with the hoboes and migratory workers, I easily supported myself for two years on the earnings of about one hundred days, thus proving the practicality of Thoreau's philosophy today.

Our lives are given us to live. Our work, the maintenance of our existence, ought to occupy a very small part of our time, thus releasing the greater part of our time for the development of our intellectual and spiritual faculties and for the cultivation of the "art of living."

[Ed. note: Mr. Payne has amplified his "hobo philosophy" in a book entitled WHY WORK? which with thorough documentation proves that it is both perfectly possible and practical to apply Thoreau's theories of economics to life today. He further proves that the popular opinion that practising Thoreauans cannot earn enough to support a family is false by offering a number of feasible occupations that will supply sufficient income. Copies of the book may be purchased from the author at 249 West 22nd Street, New York City 11.]





## THOREAU IN HIS WALDEN HUT

"When I wrote the following pages, or rather the bulk of them, I lived alone, in the woods, a mile from any neighbor, in a house which I had built myself, on the shore of Walden Pond, in Concord, Massachusetts. . ."

This drawing is reproduced through the courtesy of the Old Colony Trust Company from its advertisement in the Boston papers for December 28, 1938.

## THOREAU AND HORACE GREELEY

We have long known of the friendship between Thoreau and Horace Greeley. The two men first met when Thoreau tutored William Emerson's children on Staten Island in 1843 and used often to visit on Manhattan. From that time on, Greeley was Thoreau's most effective literary agent and took many hours from his busy life in editing the TRIBUNE to persuade magazine editors to publish Thoreau's essays. It is often forgotten however that Greeley did much to publicize Thoreau's name in his own paper. As so often happens with newspaper accounts, they are listed in bibliographies at the most and then forgotten. So far as we know offhand, although Thoreau was mentioned fairly frequently in the pages of the TRIBUNE, only one of these has ever been reprinted. This was the review of the WEEK by George Ripley which was reprinted in Dr. Jones' little volume PERTAINING TO THOREAU in 1901. Nevertheless, a glance through the TRIBUNE files brings several nearly forgotten pieces to light once again. Because we feel they should be better known, we shall reprint them here:

On July 4, 1854, Thoreau spoke before an Anti-Slavery Celebration in nearby Framingham, Mass. His address is now familiar to us as "Slavery in Massachusetts." Greeley printed this address in two and one half columns in the TRIBUNE for August 2, 1854, just a few days before WALDEN was to come off the presses. He accompanied it with an editorial which we feel worthy of being reprinted in its entirety:

### A Higher-Law speech

The lower-law journals so often make ado about the speeches in Congress of those whom they designate champions of the Higher Law, that we shall enlighten and edify them, undoubtedly, by the report we publish this morning of a genuine Higher Law Speech--that of HENRY D. THOREAU at the late celebration of our National Anniversary in Framingham, Mass., where Wm. Lloyd Garrison burned a copy of the Federal Constitution. No one can read this speech without realizing that the claims of messrs. SUMNER, SEWARD and CHASE to be recognized as higher-Law champions are of very questionable validity. Mr. THOREAU is the simon-pure article, and his remarks have a rare piquancy and telling point which none but a man thoroughly in earnest and regardless of self in his fidelity to a deep conviction ever fully attains. The humor here so signally evinced is born of pathos--it is the lightning which reveals to hearers and readers the speaker's profound abhorrence of the sacrifice or subordination of one human being to the pleasure or convenience of another. A great many will read this speech with unction who will pretend to blame us for printing it; but our back is broad and can bear censure. Let each and all be fairly heard:

It was only a few days later that WALDEN was listed in the book advertisements. Since you may be curious how publicity men worked ninety years ago, we shall reprint the ad from the August 9th

Life in the woods  
On Wednesday, Aug. 9,  
Ricknor & Fields  
will publish  
Walden: Or Life in the woods;  
by Henry D. Thoreau.

"When I wrote the following pages, or rather the bulk of them, I lived alone, in the woods, a mile from any neighbor, in a house which I had built myself, on the shore of Walden Pond, in Concord, Massachusetts, and earned my living by the labor of my hands only."

### Contents

[Here the entire table of contents is enumerated.]  
This strikingly original and interesting book will be published in 1 vol. 16 mo, in cloth, at \$1.

On the 29th of July, Greeley had already given a three and one half column digest of WALDEN under the title of "A Massachusetts Hermit." Except for a two-sentence introduction it was entirely taken from the book, so we shall not bother to reproduce it here. Nevertheless, we should not underestimate its influence in helping to sell WALDEN.

Thoreau was mentioned a number of other times in the TRIBUNE, in reports of his lectures, etc. There is little significant material there. However we do wish to reprint one more tribute in its entirety. This was the obituary which Greeley printed on May 10, 1862, four days after his death:

Henry D. Thoreau, the genial writer on the natural scenery of New-England, died at Concord, Mass., on Tuesday, May 6, after a protracted illness of more than eighteen months. He was a native of Boston, but removed with his family at the age of five years to Concord, where he has since resided. He graduated at Harvard College in 1837, and was nearly forty-five years old at the time of his death. His writings include A WEEK ON THE CONCORD AND MERRIMACK RIVERS; WALDEN, or LIFE IN THE WOODS; and various contributions to the periodical literature of the day. They are remarkable for their freedom and originality of thought, their quaint humor, and their warm sympathy with all the manifold aspects of nature. His disease was consumption, and, as we are informed, "his humor and cheerful courage did not forsake him during his sickness, and he met death as gayly as Theramenes in Xenophon's story." Mr. Thoreau, in spite of the racy individuality of his character, was much beloved and respected by his townsmen, and his writings have numerous admirers. He was honored with a public funeral from the Town Hall of Concord, on Friday, the 9th inst.

The keen-eyed student will easily find a number of technical errors in this brief obituary, but all, we think, will appreciate the respect herein tendered by one of our great Americans to another.



- Babcock, Frederic. "Among the Authors." CHICAGO SUNDAY TRIBUNE. Feb. 18, 1945. On the centennial of Thoreau's going to Walden.
- Ballou, Adin. "Fair Haven in February." N.Y. HERALD TRIBUNE. Feb. 24, 1945. A Thoreau sonnet.
- . "A New England Early Spring." N.Y. HERALD TRIBUNE. Mar. 14, 1945. An editorial on Thoreau's spring notes.
- . "Stars over Walden." N.Y. HERALD TRIBUNE. Jan. 11, 1945. Another Thoreau sonnet.
- Blanchard, Harold H. "Thoreau's Concord." TUFTONIAN, IV (Fall, 1944), 110-8. An exceptionally good account of a tour of the Thoreau country today, beautifully illustrated with photographs by B.C. Chambers and Mrs. L.A. Sohler, and a new map of Concord by Roberta Blanchard.
- Conant, Wallace B. "Franklin Benjamin Sanborn 1831-1917." CONCORD HERALD. March 1, 1945. A biography of Thoreau's friend and biographer.
- Harding, Walter. "A Bee-Line With Thoreau." NATURE OUTLOOK. February, 1945. Pp. 20-1. A brief essay on Thoreau's favorite method of hiking. In this same issue there is also an essay by Richard C. Potter on "The Concord River" only briefly mentioning Thoreau but telling much of one of his favorite haunts.
- Hillway, Tyrus. "The Personality of H.D. Thoreau." COLLEGE ENGLISH, VI (March, 1945), 328-30. A further study into the problem of Thoreau's "coldness."
- Lennon, Florence Becker. "'Walden' Centennial Celebration at City Library With Exhibit." BOULDER (Col.) DAILY CAMERA. Feb. 19, 1945. With an essay on Thoreau's life and significance.
- Stuckey, Norman. "Thoreau's Pond." BOSTON POST. Jan. 10, 1945. A letter claiming Walden Pond for Thoreau's fame only. Reprinted: BOSTON HERALD, Jan. 12, 1945; SAT. REV. OF LIT., Jan. 20, 1945.
- Teale, Edwin Way. "The Great Companions of Nature Literature." AUDUBON MAGAZINE, XLVI (Dec., 1944) 363-6. A check-list of great nature books with Thoreau leading the list in frequency.

#### A THOREAU MISCELLANY

S. R. Shapiro, New York City, contributes this enlightening comment on late Victorian mores, taken from Mary Austin's autobiography (EARTH HORIZONS. New York: Literary Guild, 1932, p. 112):

Susie had taken pains to impress upon her the childish character of her interest in nature and the inexpediency of talking about it. Especially you must not talk appreciatively about landscapes and flowers and the habits of little animals and birds to boys; they didn't like it. . . . You must not quote; especially poetry and Thoreau. An occasional light reference to Burroughs was permissible, but not Thoreau. A very little experience demonstrated that Susie was right.

The Hall of Fame may have as yet still ignored Thoreau, but Rollins College of Winter Park, Fla. has long included him in its Walk of Fame. Hamilton Holt, president of the college, writes that he personally picked up the stone from the cairn at Walden Pond for the Walk and an appropriate inscription has been carved into it.

Clayton Hoagland of Rutherford, N.J. has discovered this little Thoreau anecdote hitherto missed by the biographers and bibliographers. It is from William Hague's LIFE NOTES OR FIFTY YEAR'S OUTLOOK (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1887), Page 187. Dr. Hague was for many years a Baptist minister in Boston.

Thus it happened, one day, that Mr. Emerson was passing the house of Dr. Robbins, dentist, just as I was leaving it; and, while on the top of the steps, closing the door behind me, he hailed me from the sidewalk with the greeting, "Pray, what have you been doing there?"

"I have been getting a mutilated mouth repaired," was my reply.

"Indeed; have you come to that already? When Thoreau reached that stage of experience, and the operation had been ended, he exclaimed, 'What a pity that I could not have known sometimes how much Art outdoes Nature in this kind of outfit for life, so that I might have spoken for such a set to start with!'"

Why bibliographers grow bald young. . . . Last issue we attempted to relate briefly the history of the publication of Thoreau's Journals. As a result two hitherto unrecorded editions have come to light. Leonard Kleinfeld of Forest Hills, L.I. informs us that he has in his possession a set of the Walden Edition of Thoreau's complete works with a small piece of manuscript bound into the first volume. A note says that two hundred copies of the Walden Edition were thus specially bound and sold with a bit of manuscript. They can be easily distinguished from the regular Manuscript Edition because of the smaller size page. . . . Benton Hatch of Bucksport, Maine writes that he has seen at least one set of the Journals "bound up from the sheets of the Walden Edition... bound in brown ribbed cloth, exactly like the binding of the Walden Edition except for color, but with labels which do not carry the Works numbering."

Leonard Kleinfeld has also contributed to the society a one-page prospectus outlining briefly the history and purposes of the society. Drop the secretary a card and he will be glad to send a copy to any friend you think might be interested in joining the society.

We wonder if Howard Fast, author of FREEDOM ROAD, believes in reincarnation for in that novel (Page 141) he has Thoreau very much alive and a "recluse" in 1868. Since according to the records Thoreau passed away in 1862, we are inclined to comment that he was undoubtedly very much of a recluse by that time. But don't let that keep you away from the novel, one of the most important of the season.

Our Private Periscope on Coming Events. . . . Watch the following magazines for centennial articles on Thoreau in the near future: READER'S DIGEST, CHRISTIAN CENTURY, AUDUBON MAGAZINE, STUDIES IN PHILOLOGY, SATURDAY EVENING POST, CHRISTIAN REGISTER and SCIENTIFIC MONTHLY. Also watch for announcement of a new edition of WALDEN with an introduction by George Whicher and for a completely revised edition of Brooks Atkinson's COSMIC YANKEE.

#### CORRECTION BOX

A number of errors have crept into earlier numbers of our bulletin. It is time to clear at least part of the record.

Bulletin #8: In the bibliography, Leonard Gray's "Let Thoreau Be Thoreau" from the CONCORD JOURNAL should be dated May 21, 1942, not 1944.

Bulletin #9: The last item on Page 2 was from the CONCORD HERALD for July 13, 1944.

Bulletin #10: We reported the Gleason Map of Concord to be free of errors, but our keen-eyed vice-president, Mrs. Caleb Wheeler, has discovered at least two. Davis's Hill, she reports, is on the wrong side of the river and the Kettell Place should be across Lexington Road from R.W. Emerson's, the second black dot east of George Minott's.

#### REMARKABLE COINCIDENCE DEPT.

"If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost. . . . Now put the foundations under them." --Osa Johnson, quoted in THIS WEEK, March 7, 1943.

"If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them." --Thoreau in the concluding chapter of WALDEN.

#### WHEN THOREAU DIED

They went to him with solemn faces

As he lay upon his dying bed;  
"Have you made your peace with God?"  
they questioned.

Smilingly he shook his head;  
"We've never had a bit of trouble,  
God and I," he softly said.

--Mabel H. Marks  
--Los Angeles Times

The Thoreau Society is an informal organization of several hundred students and followers of Thoreau, banded together in their common interest in his life and works. Officers of the society are Raymond Adams, Chapel Hill, N.C., president; Mrs. Caleb Wheeler, Concord, Mass., vice-president; Walter Harding, New York City, secretary-treasurer. Membership fees are one dollar a year.

This bulletin was issued by the secretary,

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